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RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0800  
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RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 0942  
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4085  
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1599  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1447  
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY  
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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD;  
TREASURY FOR OASIA-J LEVINE;  
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION;  
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS II #16: FERNANDEZ WARNS OF  
"BALKANIZATION" BY HAITIAN IMMIGRANTS

REF: SANTO DOMINGO 168

1. (SBU) This is the 16th cable in a series reporting on the second year of the administration of Dominican president Leonel Fernandez.

(The President's remarks on "balkanization" reflect the Dominican obsession with the thorny issue of dealing with Haitian migrants; ugly incidents suggest that tensions remain high.)

Fernandez Warns of "Balkanization" by Haitian Immigrants

Dominican sensitivities about Haitian migration have been acute in the tense aftermath of the suffocation deaths of 25 Haitian immigrants who were being smuggled into the Dominican Republic hidden in the back of a truck in early January and a riot at the border that left two persons dead when authorities tried to repatriate the bodies. President Fernandez devoted part of his annual address to Dominican chiefs of mission at the Foreign Ministry January 13 to the government's views on "the massive illegal migration" of Haitians into the country. The speech was reasoned but firm.

Fernandez called for improving "the treatment and the quality of life" of Haitian workers and respecting their human rights, while emphasizing the country's sovereign right to repatriate illegal immigrants and to define the legal basis for granting Dominican nationality.

Speaking more generally, the President called for great care in determining migration policy, to avoid a risk of balkanization and territorial fragmentation that could result from settlement by Haitians of "certain portions of the national territory" -- implicitly referring to the legacy in

the country of dozens of bateyes (communities of Haitian workers and their descendants). Fernandez stated that there was no xenophobia or prejudice against Haitians here.

He called for a "great debate" on whether or not to reform the Dominican constitution, which establishes birth on Dominican soil (jus solis) as the main rule for granting citizenship, with citizenship by blood (jus sanguinis) being an exception under some circumstances. Fernandez said that there was no reason to compare the Dominican legal regime on acquisition of nationality to that of the United States.

In raising the specter of "balkanization," Fernandez touched a particularly sensitive nerve. Beyond the implications of ethnic discrimination and strife, which many Dominicans reject as uncharacteristic of their country, are longstanding Dominican anxieties that the international community might intervene on this side of the border to prevent the mistreatment of Haitian immigrants. Some even believe that such an intervention would seek to unify both sides of the island into a single state.

#### Reaction

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Reaction reported in the media was mixed. Catholic Church leaders in particular adopted a more conciliatory tone. The parish priest of Dajabon on the Dominican-Haitian border and others found that the comparison with ethnic conflict in the Balkans magnified the problem unnecessarily. Head of the civic NGO FINJUS Servio Tulio Castanos agreed, commenting that the problem would reach Balkan proportions with another

25 years of migration. Head of the Dominican Bishops' Conference Msgr. Ramon de la Rosa y Carpio called for dialogue between his country and Haiti. The bishops' annual pastoral letter, published January 20, advocated the defense of the rights of all persons against any sort of discrimination, but also called for application of clear legal solutions in the face of growing undocumented Haitian immigration.

Opposition political figures took the government to task for a failure to control the border or implement effective migration policy. A spokesman for a leading NGO on legal matters noted pointedly that "the government has in its hands a legal instrument to solve the problem"-- the 2004 Migration Law, for which draft implementing regulations are pending.

Editorialists complained of the complicity of Dominican businesses and public officials in the importation of illegal migrants as cheap labor for the agriculture, construction, and tourist industries. Diario Libre put it bluntly: "The problem is us." The paper advocated hiring Haitians and their descendants who are already in the Dominican Republic, rather than bringing in additional migrants. In a January 13 statement the resident representative of the International Organization for Migration condemned the corruption and impunity of border control personnel and called the deaths of the 25 immigrants "the tip of the iceberg" of trafficking in persons across the border.

#### Managing the Reaction

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In subsequent remarks, President Fernandez spoke of Dominican "feelings of solidarity and admiration for Haiti," and three days later he dismissed journalists' questions about the possibility of confrontation or armed conflict between the two nations. "Wherever countries share a common border, there are tensions and difficulties. The important thing is for the authorities to have a desire to overcome those issues."

On January 22 erroneous rumors about the murder of a Dominican air force sergeant prompted a rampage against Haitians in the low-income neighborhood of Guerra, near the capital. Dominican vigilantes burned the homes of as many as

30 mostly Haitian families and injured at least 10 persons, according to the press. In fact, the sergeant had been killed by a Dominican policeman.

Security forces continue routine repatriations, deporting hundreds of undocumented Haitians a week in a continuation of operations begun previously.

In their report to the President about the smuggling deaths, the Interior Minister, Armed Forces chief and Director of Migration identified as responsible parties three Dominican civilian traffickers and seven low-ranking Dominican soldiers at the border who had accepted 200 pesos each (USD 7) to allow the truck to pass. Another five Dominican civilians and two Haitian civilians were also implicated. The soldiers are to be punished for bad conduct under military law and then turned over to civilian justice. The report noted that the "extreme and challenging" conditions encountered by the victims were not very different from those faced by other Haitians trying to enter the Dominican Republic. Authorities said that investigations would continue.

12. (U) Drafted by Bainbridge Cowell.

13. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted at our SIPRNET web site (<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo>) along with extensive other material.  
HERTELL